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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 19 May 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am compelled to write to you again following a new wave of murderous Palestinian attacks against innocent Israeli citizens.

Over the past three days there have been no less than five homicide bombings targeting Israeli citizens. On Saturday, 17 May, a Palestinian terrorist, dressed as an orthodox Jew, approached a young Israeli couple strolling in Gross Square in Hebron and detonated his explosives, killing Gadi Levy and his pregnant wife, Dina Levy. The terrorist organization Hamas, which operates freely from Palestinian Authority territory, claimed responsibility for the attack.

On Sunday, 18 May, shortly before 6 in the morning, near the French Hill neighbourhood in Jerusalem, a homicide bomber, dressed as an orthodox Jew, blew himself up on a crowded civilian bus. This horrific bombing left seven civilians dead and wounded at least 20 others. The dead are: Shimon Ostinsky, Nellie Perov, Olga Brenner, Marina Tzachivirshvili, Yitzhak Moyial, Roni Yisraeli, and Raleb Tawil, a Palestinian from Shoafat. Just half an hour later, a second Palestinian bomber was intercepted as he attempted to perpetrate yet another terrorist attack in northern Jerusalem. Hamas also claimed responsibility for these two attacks.

The following day, Monday, 19 May, a Palestinian terrorist on a bicycle detonated explosives next to a military jeep near Kfar Darom, in the southern Gaza Strip. Three Israeli soldiers were injured in the blast, which killed the bomber. Hamas again claimed responsibility for this fourth attack. Later that same day a female Palestinian homicide bomber blew herself up at the entrance to the Shaarei Amakim Mall in the Israeli city of Afula. This reprehensible act of murder left three Israeli citizens dead and approximately 47 wounded. Had it not been for the efforts of an Israeli security guard who prevented the bomber from entering the shopping mall, the toll in death and injured would have been far greater. The names of those murdered in the attack are Hassan Ismail Tawatha of Jisr a-Zarqa and Avi Zrihan of Beit Shean. The name of the security guard has not yet been released. Islamic Jihad

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and Chairman Arafat's Fatah Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade both claimed responsibility for this attack.

In the last few days, with horrific terrorist attacks perpetrated in various countries around the world, we have seen once again the global nature of the terrorist threat. As Israel has repeatedly warned, terrorism anywhere is a threat to civilians everywhere. Tolerance for terrorism in one region will only strengthen the terrorist network, and increase the threat to international peace and security. We therefore reiterate our call to the international community to accept nothing less than the complete dismantling of the Palestinian terrorist infrastructure in accordance with its legal and moral obligations, as a necessary and vital precondition for peace for both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

The carnage and terror created by these recent Palestinian terrorist attacks demonstrate, once again, the major obstacle which prevents the resumption of a meaningful peace process. Palestinian terrorist groups, operating without any hindrance from Palestinian Authority areas, and enjoying the support of the Palestinian leadership, remain determined to murder Israeli civilians and to prevent the creation of an environment, free from terrorism and violence, which is necessary for peaceful dialogue. Unless and until the Palestinian leadership ceases its support and glorification of such terrorism, and takes real steps to dismantle the terrorist organizations and their infrastructure, all condemnations of terror and Palestinian talk of commitment to a peaceful settlement are utterly meaningless.

Israel cannot accept declaration and speeches by those who claim they want peace without definitive steps on the ground which demonstrate that these are not just empty words designed to placate western audiences and deceive the international community, while practical support for terrorism, by actions and omissions, continues unabated. The obligation of the Palestinian leadership and other regimes in the region to end the morally bankrupt strategy of terrorism is not conditional; such support is unjustifiable, morally reprehensible and illegal and must be eradicated immediately in order to convince the international community, and the Israeli and Palestinian people, that the tactic of double-talk and deception has finally been rejected. To this day, not a single step has been taken to prevent terrorism, and Israeli citizens continue to be deliberately targeted for murder.

The State of Israel is eager to live in peace with its neighbours and has proved its commitment to make painful compromises to that end. However, such murderous attacks prevent any chance of these hopes coming to fruition. Until such time as the Palestinian side, and the regimes which sponsor terror in the region, live up to their obligations under international law, Security Council resolutions and signed agreements to decisively fight the culture of terrorism and incitement that they have nurtured for so many years, Israel will be compelled to take the necessary defensive measures to protect its civilians. This is not a time for declarations. It is a time for action.

I submit this letter in follow-up to the many other letters we have submitted detailing the Palestinian terrorist campaign, which document the murder of innocent civilians through a sustained terrorist strategy in violation of all legal obligations and for which the terrorists and their supporters must be held fully accountable.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36 and 160, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative